

Analysis and Assessment of Chronological Explanations of the Fall of Samaria

Kenneth Bergland

Abstract

The dating of the fall of Samaria and the preceding decade is one of the most controversial and disputed areas of biblical chronology. The challenges relate to apparent conflicts in internal biblical synchronisms, conflicting claims in the Bible, Babylonian Chronicle and Assyrian sources as to who conquered Samaria and when it was done, the lack of information in the Assyrian sources as to the reign of Shalmaneser V, the number and date of Samaritan rebellions and Assyrian campaigns against Samaria, and finally the dating of when Hoshea was deposed as king over Samaria. In this article I give a survey of seven recent chronological explanations (Edwin R. Thiele, Hayim Tadmor, Nadav Na'aman, John H. Hayes/Jeffrey K. Kuan, Bob Becking, Gershon Galil and K. Lawson Younger) given of the fall of Samaria and the events leading up to it, analysing how each commentator deals with the textual data and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the theories. In the end, by way of a summary and conclusion, I also suggest a basic outline of the most credible events and chronology leading up to for the fall of Samaria.

1. Intention

The chronology relating to the fall of Samaria and the preceding decade is highly controversial among scholars (cf., e.g., Golding 1999, Kelle 2003, and Tetley 2002). It is difficult to make any general statements that will not be disputed by some. The intention in the following is to give a survey of recent chronological explanations given of the fall of Samaria and the events leading up to it, analyzing how each commentator deals with the textual data and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the theories. The major challenges within the textual data are the following:

(1) The apparent conflict in the biblical synchronisms, claiming that Hoshea came to power both in the 20th year of Jotham and the 12th year of Ahaz, and that the end of his reign and the fall of Samaria coincided with the 6th year of Hezekiah.

(2) The apparent conflict between the biblical material and the Babylonian Chronicle saying that Shalmaneser V was the conqueror of Samaria, and the Assyrian sources claiming it was Sargon II.

(3) The claim in the Assyrian sources that Sargon II defeated Samaria both in his accession year and in his second year.

(4) The lack of information on the reign of Shalmaneser V in the Assyrian sources.

(5) The number and date of Samaritan rebellions and Assyrian campaigns against Samaria.

(6) The date of Hoshea's imprisonment; prior to or at the end of his nine year reign, before, during or after the three year siege of Samaria.

We now turn to the various explanations in order to see how they deal with the basic data and the problems inherent among them.

I will analyze and assess seven proposed explanations of the chronological data. The following sequence of authors is based on the date of their last published text that I will be dealing with. This makes it easier to follow the logical progression of their argumentation, to the extent that later authors refer to previously published material. It will also help in getting a sense of the development of opinions among scholars.

2. Edwin R. Thiele

Edwin R. Thiele's book *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings* went through three revisions, with the final one being published in 1983. I will focus especially on his chapter "The Siege and Fall of Samaria".

Characteristic of Thiele's approach is what I will call his pragmatic principle of harmony. It entails the criterion for historical truth defined as a theory's ability to explain all available trustworthy data, biblical as well as extra-biblical, in a harmonious pattern. This is of course a generally accepted criterion within historiography, but in Thiele's book it takes predominance. The danger we should be aware of in such an emphasis upon harmony is the temptation to manipulate data in order to save a harmonizing reading of the data. But even if Thiele can be called a biblicist, that does not mean that he is not willing to admit errors in the biblical text. Two such cases we find in regard to the synchronisms with the kings of Judah. As this is crucial for understanding Thiele's presentation of the chronology of the fall of Samaria I will begin with them.

The first is 2 Kings 17:1 telling us that Hoshea ascended the throne in the twelfth year of Ahaz. He writes:

When the editors of Kings were bringing that book into its final shape, they did not understand dual dating for Pekah; and this fact was responsible for the synchronisms of 2 Kings 17 and 18. In 2 Kings 17:1 the accession of

Hoshea is placed in the twelfth year of Ahaz. That, however, is twelve years out of line with 2 Kings 15:30 (Thiele 1983, 134; cf. 38).

The second relates to 2 Kings 18:9–10 where we are told that Shalmaneser's three-year long siege began in Hezekiah's fourth year and Hoshea's seventh year.¹ Consequently, the synchronism between the two kings in 2 Kings 18:1 is also problematic (ibid., 38, 135, 199, 204). Again he sees the same editorial misunderstanding as the basis for moving both Pekah and Hoshea twelve years beyond their true chronology. The misunderstanding consisted in not seeing that Pekah was a rival regent first to Menahem and then to Pekaiah, and that they were not successive reigns (ibid., 134).

Earlier he explained how Pekah's reign should be seen as lasting from 752 to 732,² fitting with the twenty years assigned to his reign in 2 Kings 15:27, and how his first twelve years first overlapped with the ten years of Menahem and then with the two years of Pekaiah.³ He finds support for the claim that the editors of Kings did not understand this dual dating of Pekah, and rather saw Menahem, Pekaiah and Pekah as having had successive, not contemporaneous, reigns in the successive order given the three, as Pekah (2 Kings 15:27–31) is placed after both Menahem (2 Kings 15:16–22) and Pekaiah (2 Kings 15:23–26). He finds further evidence for the idea of rival regency in the north in this period in Hosea 5:5 and 11:12 (12:1) among others (Thiele 1983, 130). He also argues that it is implied that Israel had fallen prior to Hezekiah due to the fact that his reign is not related to any king in Israel, i.e., except in 2 Kings 18:1, 9–10, and that Hezekiah appears to have had unrestricted freedom to send an invitation into the northern kingdom for the Pesach of his first year in 2 Chron 30:1, 6, 10, implying the absence of any king and central government there (ibid., 168–71).

In regard to the synchronism in 2 Kings 15:30 between the twentieth year of Jotham and Hoshea's accession, Thiele explains that Jotham held power until 735, but that he was not killed by his successor Ahaz (ibid., 132), and thus it could be said that Hoshea's accession in 732 was in his twentieth year. But if Ahaz, and not Jotham, was the *de facto* regent in 732 it must be admitted that it is strange

¹ His approach is one of seeing both errors in the text and lack in our ability to comprehend. He writes: "If errors on the part of the scribes may prove to be one possible source of our difficulties with Hebrew chronology, yet another source must be recognized in ourselves, for we today may simply no longer be in a position to determine the underlying factors whereby the available data will be found to agree" (ibid., 41).

² All years in the following are BC, and I will therefore not repeat this throughout the paper. As the regnal year was reckoned in Israel from Nisan to Nisan, according to Thiele, I will in the following for the sake of simplicity just write the one year e.g. "732" which means "Nisan 732 to Nisan 731" (cf. Thiele 1983, 54). Thiele is among those who argue that both Judah and Israel shifted between a Nisan-Nisan and a Tishri-Tishri calendar (ibid., 43–60). He does not stick only to a Nisan-Nisan calendar as Cogan claims that he does (Cogan 1992, 1006).

³ Ibid., 121 and 129. Even if I would not say that Thiele's attempted explanation is "far-fetched", it is a matter of fact that not even he, in his attempt to be faithful to all the biblical data, is able to harmonize both the regnal years and the synchronisms (cf. Tadmor 1979, 46).

that Hoshea's accession is synchronized with the deposed Jotham and not the reigning Ahaz. One could argue that the good king Jotham (2 Kings 15:34) was reckoned by the editors as the true king of Judah compared to the evil king Ahaz (2 Kings 16:2–3), but this is speculative chronology.

Based on 2 Kings 18:9–10 Thiele places Shalmaneser's siege of Samaria between Hoshea's seventh and ninth year, which according to his reckoning would be 725/24 to 723/22.⁴ As Sargon came to power on 12 Tebeth, about the end of December, in 722, he would have ascended the Assyrian throne nine months after the fall of Samaria. Based on Olmstead and Tadmor he dismisses Sargon's claims in the Khorsabad Annals as untrue on the following basis: (1) his accession year would be in the winter – a bad time for military campaigns; (2) Samaria is not mentioned in the Eponym relating to Sargon's rule; (3) the capture of Samaria by Sargon in his accession year is mentioned only in later, not the early, texts in his life; and (4) Sargon was occupied with other issues in his accession year and first year (*ibid.*, 165–66). The sole conqueror of Samaria to him is thus Shalmaneser, in accord with the biblical account and the Babylonian Chronicle. He sees no reason to postulate that Sargon is the one being referred to as the “king of Assyria” in 2 Kings 17:4–6, but sees the natural reading as a reference to Shalmaneser in the entire passage (*ibid.*, 163–68). Even if Thiele does not discuss this explicitly, this would imply that it was Shalmaneser who deported the Israelites, something it is difficult to support from the Assyrian sources, but easy in regard to Sargon. He notes, but does not date, the following events in 2 Kings 17:3, 4: the time of Shalmaneser's initial campaign in 2 Kings 17:3, the time when Hoshea became a vassal and the time when Shalmaneser discovered Hoshea's treachery prior to his campaign in 725/24 (*ibid.*, 164). Based on the coincidence between his dating Shalmaneser's siege between 725–23 and the indication in the Eponym Chronicle of campaigns by Shalmaneser during these years, he permits himself to read Samaria into the mutilated Eponym Chronicle during these years (*ibid.*, 165–166). Thiele sees the reference to Hoshea's imprisonment in 2 Kings 17:4, which he refers to as “the death of Hoshea” without explaining the reasons for seeing his imprisonment as identical to his death, as taking place simultaneously with the fall of Samaria in 723/22.⁵ Finally, he therefore sees Sargon as only having campaigned against Samaria in his second year, then quelling a rebellion of the kingless Samaritans and subsequently deporting them (Thiele 1983, 167–168).

I agree with Galil that a weakness in Thiele's explanation is that the completion of the Eponym Chronicle for the years 725–23 with “Samaria” cannot be supported by internal evidence in Assyrian sources themselves (Galil 1995, 56).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 163. Thiele argues that Samaria fell in 723, and not 722 as is commonly believed (*ibid.*, 122).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 162. That the Assyrians did take leading rebels as prisoners of war, without executing them, is confirmed in the fragment from Sargon's Annals from the Tablet Collection, A. 16947, line 7–11 (Tadmor, 1958, 23).

Thiele also does not attempt to give an explanation of why Hoshea's imprisonment is mentioned in v. 4 before the siege in v. 5. I also agree that, as I have expanded upon above, Thiele either contradicts or has questionable explanations of the synchronisms between Hoshea and Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah.⁶ On the other hand, Galil misunderstands Thiele when criticizing him for having placed the deportation of the people in 723 and not in 720 (Thiele 1983, 167–168). But it is true that Thiele undermines his own reading of 2 Kings 17:1–6 as only referring to Shalmaneser, when he in other places claims that Sargon was responsible for the deportation in v. 6. Even if Thiele's argument of reconstruction of the Eponym Chronicle is weak, as it lacks internal evidence in Assyrian sources, the suggestion has certain credibility. I also think that Thiele gives a solid argumentation for why Sargon's claims to having taken Samaria in his accession year should be considered as untrue, and Galil's critique is weak here. As we noted in the introduction to Thiele, his pragmatic principle of harmony makes him vulnerable to "systemic fluctuations" and "shifts which were unlikely in actual practice", as Cogan has criticized him for, altering the data in order to fit his harmonious scheme (Cogan 1992, 1006). Still, in the period we are dealing with, where he for example rejects the synchronisms in 2 Kings 17 and 18, Thiele's explanations should be given the credit that he does not dismiss data unless he can give an adequate explanation of why it deviates from what he sees as the true chronology. This is in contrast to many other commentaries that simply dismiss data when it does not fit their theory.

3. Hayim Tadmor

In regard to Tadmor I will consult three different sources by him. The first one is his article "The Campaigns of Sargon II of Assur: A Chronological-Historical Study" from 1958. The second is his article "The Chronology of the First Temple Period: A Presentation and Evaluation of the Sources" from 1979 (Tadmor 1979), and finally his comments in *II Kings* in The Anchor Bible Series, which he co-authored together with Mordechai Cogan (Cogan and Tadmor 1988).

Tadmor sees the author, the Deuteronomist (Dtr) as he calls him, as having various and partially conflicting sources at his disposal. "The exilic redactor of the book of Kings" had available extensive chronographic works, older chronicles and king-lists. Among his sources especially the Israelite chronology did not survive intact, and he had to add details "on the basis of his own calculations or

⁶ If Thiele is correct in his claim that the "school of the prophets" formed a continuous line of editors for the Book of Kings it is strange that they should have gotten the synchronisms wrong. At this point he is thus forced to say that the synchronisms were written at a late stage when the proper synchrony was not understood. But this also weakens his position that the Book of Kings was composed and accumulated over time close to the historical events by the "school of the prophets" (Thiele, 134 and 193–204).

approximations. Because these calculated dates did not always suit the heterogeneous evidence in the sources, they gave rise to some contradictions” (Tadmor 1979, 45). He sees the editor of the Book of Kings as adjusting and altering his sources where he deemed it necessary.⁷ Of importance to our study is therefore his view that the Israelite data is less reliable compared to the Judean data. The Dtr apparently tried to create clarity in the “confusion” in the “confused decade” in which he wrote. Problems in the MT are thus largely explained as based on the inconsistencies of the sources at the author’s disposal.⁸ The weakness with this approach is firstly to identify when the problem is with our ability to understand the text as opposed to when contradictory sources are reflected in the text. Secondly, as he does not establish identifiable characteristics of the various sources or textual borders between them, aiding us in differentiating the supposed sources, the reference to various sources easily become an arbitrary fragmentary hypothesis of the sources. Thirdly, without having identified the sources, the basis of any attempt to evaluate their relative credibility, so as to prefer one source and its data to others, remains meagre.

Tadmor/Cogan place Hoshea’s nine year rule from 732/31–724/23 (Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 195 and 198). Early in Shalmaneser’s reign Hoshea became his vassal and paid yearly tribute to him until he was caught in secret embassy and cessation of tribute-payments. He probably had to go to Assyria to render an explanation, and was imprisoned there. According to them, “Hoshea’s arrest preceded the Assyrian campaign against Israel”.⁹ Based on the reference in Josephus’ *Antiquities* to two campaigns against Tyre by “Selampsas”, understood as Shalmaneser, and the indications in the mutilated *Eponym Chronicle* that there were campaigns in 727, 725, 724 and 723, they suggest that the two campaigns against Tyre took place respectively in 727 and 725 (Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 199). On this basis they propose that Hoshea’s initial submission might be synchronized with Shalmaneser’s first campaign against Tyre in 727 and Hoshea’s

⁷ Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 195. Tadmor speaks both of the editor in singular and the editors in plural (cf. e.g. Tadmor 1979, 45, 47 and 51). As far as I understand him he speaks of “the editors of the chronological framework of Kings” in relation to the authors of the various sources utilized by the one exilic editor that composed the entire book.

⁸ Tadmor 1979, 45. Tadmor also suggests that a practice of rounding of years by the editor and the phenomena of co-regencies (even if the editor himself assumes or ignored them for the entire period of the Israelite Monarchy) might explain some of the discrepancies in the biblical sources (Tadmor 1979, 51–53.)

⁹ *Ibid.*, 196. In his 1958 article Tadmor stated this point more cautiously: “It seems that when Samaria fell Hoshea had already been deported to Assyria” (Tadmor 1958, 37). A shift in view appears to have taken place from Tadmor’s 1958 article using the word “deported” to the 1988 commentary saying that “he was called before his overlord, probably to Assyria, to explain his treasonous behavior, and there detained and jailed” (Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 196). It is not clear to me why Hoshea would have freely met the Assyrians unless it was under the pretence that he and his people were not rebelling. The variation in Tadmor’s language here reflects the silence in the text in regard to the details of the arrest. I agree with Hayes and Kuan in that it is highly unlikely that Hoshea surrendered voluntarily (Hayes and Kuan 1991, 162).

secret embassy and subsequent deposition to the siege of Tyre in 725 (*ibid.*, 198–199).

Like Thiele, Tadmor dismisses the synchrony in 18:1, 9, 10 between Hoshea and Hezekiah. But he does it for different reasons. Tadmor accepts the dating found there of Hezekiah's accession relative to the siege and fall of Samaria, but not relative to Hoshea's reign. It is the latter, the time of Hoshea's reign, that is out of joint with true chronology according to Tadmor. He finds support for this in Isa 14:28, interpreted to mean that Ahaz died in the same year as Tiglath-pileser. Hezekiah thus came to the throne in 727/26.¹⁰ According to Tadmor Hezekiah therefore ascended the Judean throne in the sixth year of Hoshea, and not the third year as 18:1 claims. This also puts him at odds with the siege beginning, according to 18:9, in the fourth year of Hezekiah and the seventh year of Hoshea, and the fall of Samaria, according to 18:10, in the sixth year of Hezekiah and the ninth year of Hoshea (Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 216, Tadmor 1979, 57). Unlike Thiele, Tadmor also dismisses "the artificial calculation of the chronographer" in 17:6, where the author dates the fall of Samaria to Hoshea's ninth year. The author "did not know that Samaria held out for over two calendar years without a king" (Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 195, cf. 216). Tadmor therefore dates Hoshea's imprisonment to 724 (Tadmor 1979, 54). The chronology of 17:6 is thus explained as reflecting ignorance on the part of the author. This ignorance goes further. For while v. 6 sees Shalmaneser as the sole agent of the siege, capture and deportation of Samaria, the true history according to Tadmor/Cogan is that "two kings of Assyria oversaw the events referred to in v. 6; Shalmaneser V captured Samaria; Sargon II exiled Israel" (Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 197, cf. 200). Shalmaneser besieged Samaria for at least two calendar years and captured it in the winter of 722/21 before his own death (*ibid.*, 199). Throughout the entire siege the city apparently endured without a king. Tadmor/Cogan do admit that it is rather "remarkable" (*ibid.*, 199), and it is legitimate to ask whether it is likely. Further, having spent over two years taking the city, the Assyrian army hastily returned home upon the news of Shalmaneser's death, apparently to take care of internal affairs, and left Samaria to herself. According to Tadmor, this hasty departure of the Assyrians and the news of domestic strife within Assyria could have been the main causes of the subsequent rebellion in the west (Tadmor 1958, 37; cf. Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 199).

It was only in 720 that the Assyrians returned to the west, then with Sargon as king. Tadmor/Cogan dismiss Sargon's claim in the Khorsabad Annals that he took Samaria in his accession year, i.e. 722. This took place rather in his second year, in 720, according to them (*ibid.*, 200; cf. Tadmor 1958, 38). This follows Tadmor's earlier article from 1958. Even though it was common among earlier scholars to accept Sargon's claim in the Khorsabad Annals that he conquered

¹⁰ Tadmor 1979, 58. This however puts him in contradiction with 18:13, stating that Sennacherib came against Judah in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah, the date of which according to Tadmor "is fixed beyond any doubt as the year 705 BCE" (Tadmor 1979, 58).

Samaria in his accession year, Tadmor challenged this understanding in this article (Tadmor 1979, 57–58; cf. Tadmor 1958, 33). The Babylonian Chronicle and the Ashur Charter confirm in contrast to the Khorsabad Annals, according to him, that Sargon did not conduct a military campaign in his accession year or first year of reign.¹¹ Sargon had to spend his accession year and first full year of reign putting down all the rebellions arising throughout the empire after he had usurped the throne (Tadmor 1958, 30–31). The Ashur Charter reflects “the first and a more reliable method developed in the early years of Sargon’s reign” dating “Sargon’s campaigns of ‘year 2’ (720) to his second *palū*” (ibid., 31). In the Khorsabad Annals, written three years before Sargon’s death, an “effort was made to ‘normalize’ chronology and to glorify Sargon’s reign by starting the account of his wars with a major victory” (ibid., 31; cf. also 32).

In the end there are some issues that Tadmor’s theory does not seem to answer satisfactorily. Firstly, it is true that the order of the text in 17:1–6 leaves the impression that Hoshea was imprisoned before the siege. But if Tadmor/Cogan are right in that the chronographer was wrong both in 17:1–6 and 18:1, 9, 10 in regard to timing, how can we then trust his order of events in these passages and argue that Hoshea was imprisoned prior to the siege? Secondly, as Tadmor/Cogan themselves write that the campaign according to the Eponym Chronicle in 727 “is the last item in the reign of Tiglath-pileser and has nothing to do with Shalmaneser V or Israel’s Hoshea” (Cogan and Tadmor 1988, 199), it is challenging to see, based on Josephus, how “Hoshea’s first submission to Shalmaneser (v. 3) can be coordinated with the first encounter with Tyre in 727” (ibid., 199). Did Tiglath-pileser and Shalmaneser have one campaign each in 727? Is this a likely scenario? Thirdly, it is also unclear how the kingless Samaritans would be strong enough to resist the Assyrian army for at least two years of siege, and how they after having been conquered a first time still had the courage and strength to raise a new rebellion. On the other hand, if the Assyrians already had Hoshea in prison, why would they be moved to attack Samaria? Fourthly, it is also strange that the Assyrian army would have left Samaria entirely to herself after just having spent two to three years in taking her (cf. Galil 1995, 57–58).

4. Nadav Na’aman

Na’aman published his article “The Historical Background to the Conquest of Samaria (720 BC)” in 1990 (Na’aman 1990). His intention is to challenge what he calls the commonly accepted “hypothesis of the two conquests of Samaria,” accepted by for example Thiele and Tadmor, and suggest a new reconstruction of the events surrounding the fall of Samaria. He does this basically by discrediting

¹¹ Ibid., 25. As the Assyrian custom, from Adad-nirari II to Tiglath-pileser III, was to have the king serve as eponym in his second full year of reign, it is noteworthy to find a deviation from this both with Shalmaneser V and Sargon II (Cogan, 2008, 167–172, Tadmor 1958, 28).

or reinterpreting the sources utilized by other scholars and resting heavily upon Sargon's claims to have defeated Samaria and deported her people. Still, he himself basically ends up with a moderate revision of the two-conquest theory as he also argues for two conquests, one in the accession year 727 of Shalmaneser and one in 720 in the second year of Sargon (*ibid.*, 210–211). Na'aman should be credited for drawing in archaeological evidence in a debate that primarily hovers over textual data. Still, the way he uses this data I find inconclusive. He rests primarily on the argument of silence, i.e. the absence of archaeological evidence indicating a severe siege and destruction by the Assyrian army of Samaria (*ibid.*, 209 and 220). Archaeology has shown several times how little can soundly be concluded according to this line of reasoning. When he writes that “the best reconstruction is one that best fits the majority of evidence and is not contradicted by any unequivocal testimony”, the point is well taken, but one would have appreciated more self-awareness in that his theory is one of those dismissing and twisting most of the textual data. He seems to juggle with the evidence in order to serve his purpose of undermining the “hypothesis of the two conquests of Samaria” and suggest an original interpretation of the data.

Within the biblical material Na'aman focuses especially on 2 Kings 17:3–6. Based on the reasonable presentation of the “chain of events” and on stylistic and linguistic grounds, his denial appears to be akin to the claim made by some, that we find in vs. 3–4 and 5–6 “two parallel accounts of the same historical event ... originating from different archives” (*ibid.*, 212–213). Instead he claims that the order of the events given here is basically a correct one. That being said, he firstly dismisses the chronological data in the passage, specifically the three-year siege and capture of Samaria in the ninth year of Hoshea in vs. 5–6, claiming that it is based on a misinterpretation of the primary editor (DtrH) of his sources (*ibid.*, 220–221 and 225). Secondly, he questions events in the account. In regard to the three-year siege he leaves it open whether this took place or not, even if his use of the archaeological absence of evidence would lead him to deny the siege altogether (Na'aman 1990, 209, 211, 220–221 and 223). He explains the account of the three-year siege as a “historical deduction by the Deuteronomistic Historian” (DtrH) indicating that he read into the three-year time gap, between the rebellion and imprisonment of Hoshea and the Assyrian conquest and siege, a three-year prolonged siege of Samaria (*ibid.*, 220–221 and 225). Thirdly, he alters some of the events in the passage. To fit the claim in the Babylonian Chronicle that Shalmaneser ravaged or conquered Samaria, he supposes that 17:3 tells us of an “act of disobedience” on the part of Hoshea in 727 and a subsequent clash in the accession year of Shalmaneser, not supported by 2 Kings 17:3 and pressing the Babylonian Chronicle hard (*ibid.*, 213). That Shalmaneser marched against Hoshea does not necessarily mean that it ended in a clash between them (cf. Hayes and Kuan 1991, 160–161). Rather, the impression left by the verse is that under the threat of a possible military clash Hoshea submitted to Shalmaneser and paid tribute to him. And fourthly, he manipulates the identity of the agents. Despite the

natural reading of 2 Kings 17:1–6 as Shalmaneser being the “king of Assyria” referred to throughout the passage, not only does he argue that the deportation of the Israelites in v. 6b really refers to Sargon, as most commentators agree upon, but also that the attack and capture in vs. 5–6a refers to Sargon (Na’aman 1990, 217, 219 and 221).

He might be correct when saying that “eliminating the erroneous dates enables us to suggest a new reconstruction of the events leading to the fall of Samaria, and this reconstruction fits all the available data much better”, but what value has such a “fit” when so much of the data has been dismissed? (Ibid., 224) In this case Na’aman seems to take Sargon’s claims as his guiding rule for how to relate to the other sources. Given that this trust is out of line with the general scholarly opinion after Tadmor’s 1958 article, it is strange that Na’aman nowhere argues for the reliability of Sargon’s claims.

As the only event describing Shalmaneser’s rule in the Babylonian Chronicle was that he destroyed Samaria, it is only by pressing the text that you can make it say that this had to be in his accession year.¹² As Shalmaneser ascended the throne in Tebeth 25, which would be in the winter, the postulate that there was a major campaign in the season the kings usually stayed at home is unlikely. Just as Na’aman is correct in that there is no internal support within the Chronicle itself to assign Shalmaneser’s conquest of Samaria to his fourth or fifth year, so neither does it give a basis to assign it to his accession year as he does.¹³ Finally, he offers no good explanation as to why the Assyrians would leave the Israelite throne vacant for two to three years after imprisoning Hoshea, if they had enough influence in the land to arrest and deport him (Na’aman 1990, 218).

5. John H. Hayes and Jeffrey K. Kuan

Hayes and Kuan published their article “The Final Years of Samaria (730–720 BC)” in 1991 (Hayes and Kuan 1991). Their approach is characterized by a basic trust in the biblical account and most of the extra-biblical sources, a minute reading of the sources, together with consulting prophetic literature within the biblical corpus, especially the Hoshea. Their desire to coordinate all the details they find in the sources, however, leads them to an accumulative approach ending, for example, with a proposal of four rebellions in Samaria and four Assyrian conquests of the city in the 720s. Due to the same intent they also propose one or two native unnamed kings in Samaria between Hoshea’s arrest and the fourth conquest by Sargon in 720.

¹² Cf. critique of Na’aman on this point in *ibid.*, 158; Younger, 1999, 465–467.

¹³ Na’aman 1990, 211. For a contrast to the idea that the transversal line in the Babylonian Chronicle gives a basis for seeing Shalmaneser’s conquest of Samaria as having taken place in his accession year, see Becking 1992, 24. Cf. Cogan 2008, 182 where he makes the point that nothing can be concluded on the basis of the transversal line.

Beginning with the biblical chronological information about the siege and capture of Samaria as in the seventh and ninth year of Hoshea, they try to pinpoint as exactly as possible when he ascended the throne, as this gives them the year for both the siege and the capture. For our purpose here we can just note that they see Hoshea as having received approval by Tiglath-pileser to become king in 733/32, prior to his revolt against and murder of Pekah, 732/31 as his actual seizure of power and accession year, and 731/30 as his first regnal year (*ibid.*, 153–156).

The four rebellions in Samaria suggested by Hayes/Kuan are placed within the following periods and aligned to the following references:

(1) Nisan 728–Nisan 727: only implied according to them in 2 Kings 17:3;

(2) Nisan 726–Nisan 724: referred to in 17:4;

(3) Nisan 724–722: referred to according to them in Hos 8:4–6; 10:5 (with the fall of Samaria being between 15 Marheshvan and the death of Shalmaneser in Tebet);

(4) 722 (at Sargon's ascension)–720: referred to in Hos 10:1–8; 13:10, 11.¹⁴

Correspondingly, they suggest four Assyrian campaigns to quell the revolts:

(1) Tebet 727–Nisan 726: when Hoshea submitted and paid tribute without resistance as mentioned in 2 Kings 17:3¹⁵;

(2) 725–24: ending with the arrest of Hoshea, looting of the royal sanctuary at Bethel, provincialization of Samaria and initial deportation of the people, referred to in the Babylonian Chronicle, 2 Kings 17:4b, Hos 10:13b–15, and possibly Isa 32:14 according to them¹⁶;

(3) Marheshvan 724–722: being the three year siege referred to in 2 Kings 17:5–6 and 18:9–11 (Hayes and Kuan 1991, 168–169);

(4) 720: referred to in 2 Kings 17:24 and Sargon's sources.¹⁷

¹⁴ Hayes and Kuan 1991, 167 and 179–181. They are open as to whether there was a rebellion in 726 or not (*ibid.*, 179). They should receive credit for drawing upon material from the prophetic literature, especially the book of Hoshea, in reconstructing the history. For another opinion see Becking 1992, 47.

¹⁵ Hayes and Kuan 1991, 160–161. Like Tadmor and Cogan they coordinate the 727 campaign with the campaign against Tyre referred to in Josephus' *Antiquities*.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 162–166. They hold that both Shalmaneser and Sargon deported Samaritans (*ibid.*, 169). Further, they criticize Na'aman on the one hand for associating the ravaging of Samaria with Shalmaneser's accession year, and on the other hand the majority of scholars who have associated it with his last year. Instead they argue that the horizontal line in the Babylonian Chronicle between line 28 and 29 indicate that the mention of Shalmaneser's ravaging of Samaria in line 28 took place sometime before his fifth and final year mentioned below in line 29 (*ibid.*, 158–159). In my mind the arguments based on the horizontal line to date Shalmaneser's attack on Samaria remain inconclusive. The only thing we can say with certainty is that the Babylonian Chronicle claims that Shalmaneser conquered Samaria sometime during his reign. Cf. Younger 1999, 481, for a critique of them at this point.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 171–178 and 179–181. 2 Kings 17:24 does not, however, refer to a military campaign, but just a settlement of foreign people in Israel. Sargon's claims to a military campaign would thus not be recorded at all in the biblical account.

It is true that this would indicate an intensification of the Assyrian response to the rebellions, something that would be expected of an insubordinate vassal state. A strong point in their theory is that they are able to explain why Shalmaneser is attributed with both the capture and deportation of the people in 17:5–6 (*ibid.*, 166). But my question is how likely it is that Samaria would have been able to remain basically in continuous rebellion from 728–720, raising revolts three times after the three assumed blows of the Assyrian army, a revolt that was finally quelled only with the fourth attack in 720. And how lenient is it reasonable to assume that Shalmaneser and his army would be, leaving at least twice the Israelites capable of an immediate resurrection right after a previous revolt had been put down? And is the documentation in the Assyrian sources what we would have expected given this scenario? The mutilated Eponym Chronicle does not give us free reign for our imagination, but should instead call us to caution. Hoshea's loyalty in v. 3 and the subsequent treachery and arrest of him in v. 4 does imply a certain time gap. Even if there is a logical difference between the events of v. 4 and v. 5–6, it is only with much goodwill that one can accept seeing them as representing two different campaigns.

In addition to the criticism above, firstly the postulate of a one to two year gap between the arrest of Hoshea and the siege has a very hypothetical nature, lacking satisfying evidence (*ibid.*, 168). Secondly, by being willing to move the start of the siege down to between Maršhevan 724 to Tishri 723, even Nisan 723 to Nisan 722, with the fall of Samaria sometime after 722, they very quickly come at odds with the biblical statements of a three-year siege (*ibid.*, 168). It seems as if they become inclined to expanding the time due to all the Israelite rebellions and Assyrian attacks they try to squeeze into this relatively short period. Secondly, the extensive argumentation for the claim that there were one or two native kings after Hoshea, appointed by the rebellious people, becomes very speculative as none of the sources gives us any indication that there was a king on the throne during this time. Their hypothetical reconstruction of the Calah Inscription at this point, is too weak a basis for this claim.¹⁸ To me their theory would have done much better if they had dropped the claim of the one or two post-hoshean kings. On the other hand, their claim that Shalmaneser himself provincialized Samaria would be rather appealing as it would explain the absence of a king in Israel up to Sargon's attack in 720.¹⁹ Still, this asks for an explanation as to why Sargon then claims in the Calah Summary Inscription to have made Samaria into a province.²⁰

¹⁸ Hayes and Kuan 1991, 172–178. Their suggestion that the Calah Inscription should be read as the kingless Israelites “came to an agreement” among themselves to appoint for themselves a king, appears strange as the natural reading would be that they came to an agreement with some foreigner(s) (*ibid.*, 175).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 174. They are in my opinion correct when stating that it is not likely that the Assyrians would simply have left Samaria without a king after the arrest of Hoshea, unless they had made or intended to make it into a province.

²⁰ They agree with the majority of scholars that Sargon's claim to have taken Samaria in his accession year is erroneous (*ibid.*, 170).

Thirdly, ascribing all references to “the king of Assyria” in 17:1–6 to Shalmaneser has some credibility, as mentioned already, since a natural reading of the verses leaves us with the impression that this was what the author thought. Given this it is, however, not clear why the “king of Assyria” in 17:24 should suddenly appear here to be Sargon, while it was the same king all along in 17:1–6.²¹

6. Bob Becking

Becking published his book *The Fall of Samaria: An Historical and Archaeological Study* in 1992 (Becking 1992). He should be commended for discussing the different sources independently before comparing them and bringing them together. He closely examines Tadmor’s two-conquest hypothesis, and concludes that it cannot be falsified based on the texts that have been discovered so far, and that Tadmor’s basic conclusions in his 1958 article are sound even if they need to be modified at certain points. In regard to the biblical material he takes a tradition-critical approach, seeing 2 Kings 17:3–4 as reflecting annals from the northern kingdom while 2 Kings 17:5–6 and 18:9–11 reflect archives from Jerusalem (ibid., 49). He writes: “I have no other argument for this hypothesis than a conceptual one: it fits within the scheme of a double-redaction of the Deuteronomistic History.” (Ibid., 49) It is really no sound argument to say that one theory fits another theory. If it is not the best explanation of the textual data, it has little to offer. Further, his explanation creates more problems than it solves, as I find his dealing with the biblical material to be the weakest point in his approach.

Beginning with the Assyrian sources, he argues in regard to the Babylonian Chronicle against those claiming that we should read ^{uru}Šá-ba-ra-’-in instead of ^{uru}Šá-ma-ra-’-in, as they deny that it refers to Shalmaneser’s destruction of Samaria. Like Tadmor, Becking sees no reason for why the city referred to should not be identified as Samaria.²² In regard to the term *ḥepû* he shows, contrary to Na’aman, that the term is used to describe military action against extensive areas but also the conquest and ruination of countries and cities (ibid., 24–25). As we have seen, Tadmor spent a lot of energy in showing that Sargon’s claim in the Khorsabad Annals of having taken Samaria in his accession year was an editorial erroneous projection from events in 720 to 722, in order to leave an impression of a glorious accession year and have a military victory for each year. Becking raises the question as to whether this explanation is really necessary. He does not see that the broken ...r]i-na-a-a [... should necessarily be read as ^{uru}Sa-ma-r]i-na-a-a, i.e. Samaria, as he notes thirteen other cities and villages that also end with the -rina. This is the only instance where Sargon supposedly dates the capture of

²¹ Ibid., 169. Interestingly, Sargon does not appear to be directly referred to in the biblical material, except in Isa 20:1.

²² Ibid., 23. Further, in regard to the horizontal or transversal line he concludes that “an exact date cannot be concluded from this chronicle” (ibid., 24).

Samaria to his accession year. If Becking is right, then it appears to be only one date claimed by Sargon for his conquest of Samaria, namely 720 (*ibid.*, 39–45). Even if there are other possibilities for reading the Khorsabad Annals, it is still a question if it is likely that any of the other cities known ending in *-rina* are candidates as referents in this text. The argument for the reconstruction of “Samaria” in line 11 of the Khorsabad Annals is thus analogous to the argument for reading “Samaritans” in line 25 of the Calah Summary Inscription. In both cases, the absence of other likely candidates makes most scholars fall back upon the Samaria/Samaritans alternative.

When Becking turns to the biblical material he primarily focuses on 2 Kings 17 and 18 and separates them into two accounts providing different scenarios: The Israelite account in 2 Kings 17:3–4 speaks of two campaigns against Samaria, the first in 727, where Hoshea again became a vassal after having revolted at Tiglath-pileser’s death, but just in order to rebel again by seeking alliance with “So, the king of Egypt” and stopping to pay tribute to Assyria.²³ This time the reaction was to imprison Hoshea. But here the account stops: “The capture of Hoshea is the last detail from the annals of Israel, at least as far as they were taken over by the author of 2 Kings 17:3–4.” (*Ibid.*, 51) Of course, it is possible to imagine that someone in the north just had time to grab the annals and flee to Judah ahead of the Assyrian army, thus explaining why the fall itself was not recorded. As Becking himself does not find the biblical material to be clear as to when Hoshea was imprisoned, if Hoshea was imprisoned after or at the end of the siege, it is again strange to find no mention of the siege in the northern account. As Samaria only fell in 723 after a three year siege, according to Becking, the imagined person running to Jerusalem with the northern account under his arm would have had up to three years to write about the siege before being forced to flee! Further, the Judean account reflected, according to him, in 2 Kings 17:5–6 and 18:9–11 does not give a reason for why the Assyrians marched against Samaria. It could be understood as purely motivated by Assyrian imperial ambitions. But it would appear awkward that the first reference to Shalmaneser in this supposed Judean account would only refer to him as “the king of Assyria” in 17:5–6 without naming him.²⁴ Further, if 17:5–6 and 18:9–11 reflect the same source, why is Shalmaneser’s name only given in the latter and not the former?²⁵

²³ He dismisses the prophetic literature as reliable historical sources, contrary to, for example, Hayes and Kuan, saying that “they cannot be considered as historical sources, although they give an insight into the ‘history of mentality’ relating to ruin and destruction” (*ibid.*, 47).

²⁴ Here Becking gives the ad hoc argument that the editor altered the text, as the name was already given in using the northern account (*ibid.*, 52). But if this was the case, if the editor was willing to alter his sources, why did he not write them as one integrated unit?

²⁵ Becking explains the duration of the siege, mentioned in the Judean account as three years, as due to “the strategic location of Samaria and by the defensive buildings constructed by Ahab and Omri” (*ibid.*). But as the Assyrians had possibly quickly taken Samaria two years earlier in Becking’s view, it is strange why they now suddenly would need three years! Here I find Hayes/Kuan’s

7. Gershon Galil

Galil wrote his article “The Last Years of the Kingdom of Israel and the Fall of Samaria” in 1995 as a critical survey of the major approaches to and a proposal of a reconstruction of the last campaign and fall of Samaria (Galil 1995).

He writes: “Some of the chronological data in the Book of Kings are accurate, while others are later additions by the author. The situation of the fall of Samaria in the last years of Hoshea is probably an invention of the author.”²⁶ He basically moves all the immediate events relating to the fall of Samaria to the years 723–720. He sees no connection between Assyria and Israel before this point. According to him, Hoshea ascended the throne during the reign of Tiglath-pileser in 732/31 and remained loyal through Shalmaneser’s reign until 723 (*ibid.*, 59). Further he dismisses the claim that Shalmaneser campaigned against him in an early stage in his reign, making Hoshea become his vassal as mentioned in 2 Kings 17:3. The reference to treachery and rebellion in 17:4 he dates to the time around 723. The reason for his rebellion he associates with the rebellion of Tyre already taking place, with the first Assyrian campaign in 725 and the second in 724/23 when they besieged the city.²⁷ As Shalmaneser approached Hoshea in 723, the latter apparently came out to meet him in order to attain a compromise, but the Assyrian king arrested him and continued against Samaria. Even if Galil calls the account of the fall of Samaria in the Book of Kings an “invention”, he still trusts the information of the nine regnal years for Hoshea, the synchronies given in 2 Kings 18:1, 9–10 and the three-year siege of Samaria. He thus claims that 723 – the last and ninth year of Hoshea – was in the fourth year of Hezekiah, and the fall of Samaria in 720 in his sixth year, and that the siege lasted from 722 till 720. If he is right, this would explain why the Assyrians did not replace Hoshea, as they would not be in control of Samaria during these years. The people being loyal to Hoshea would not appoint a new king for themselves either (*ibid.*, 60). Further, he sees it as “inconceivable” that the Assyrian army left Samaria at the news of Shalmaneser’s death, and claims that it was a relatively small military force anyway that would have enforced the siege of Samaria, possibly just upholding a blockade. It would have remained despite the upheavals in the rest of the empire at Sargon’s ascension, until Sargon came in 720 and finally took the city and deported the people (*ibid.*, 59–60). He accepts Tadmor’s explanation that

explanation more reasonable, that the Assyrians probably did not press the siege too hard (Hayes and Kuan 1991, 169).

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 63. He sees one author as having composed the entire Book of Kings about 150 years after the fall of Samaria, thus implicitly 17:3–6 and 18:9–12 have the same author, who had reliable testimonies originating from the Book of Chronicles of the Kings of Judah, but not having any Israelite source (*ibid.*, 53 and 62–63).

²⁷ The five-year siege of Tyre mentioned by Josephus he thus places between 724 and 720 (*ibid.*, 60).

Sargon's scribes in the Khorsabad Annals dated the fall of Samaria to his accession year for "literary-ideological reasons".

A main challenge felt by Galil is to explain 2 Kings 17:3. He writes:

the author of Kings believed that Hoshea was not an Assyrian vassal at the beginning of his reign, but in his sources he found that Hoshea rebelled against Assyria. He resolved this inconsistency in v 3, which is merely his own interpretation, the result of his effort to clarify his sources and to explain how Hoshea could rebel against Assyria if previously he had not been its vassal. According to the author's conception, Israel became an Assyrian vassal state only during the time of Shalmaneser, not immediately upon the coronation of Hoshea. (*Ibid.*, 63)

Here he reads more out of the verse than what is reasonable. That the author does not mention Hoshea's relation to Tiglath-pileser cannot be taken as evidence that he thought he was not a vassal before Shalmaneser. It is apparently Galil who sees no true encounters between Assyria and Hoshea referred to in Kings before 723. While v. 3 expresses the apparent solution to the author's problem, it poses a problem to Galil and he does away with it by claiming it is an artificial construction by the author. Instead of trying to understand how the order of events as described in 17:3–6 could have taken place, he attempts to present the succession of events as illogical, something they of course are not (*ibid.*, 53). There is nothing problematic in saying that Shalmaneser marched against Hoshea and that the latter became his vassal, and that Hoshea subsequently rebelled and was met with a new Assyrian campaign where he was arrested and the city besieged, or the city besieged and Hoshea imprisoned at its fall.

Even if Galil attempts to follow the chronological information given in 2 Kings 17 and 18, he comes at odds with several events mentioned in the account. The first is, as just mentioned, the initial campaign of Shalmaneser where Hoshea became his vassal in 17:3. Secondly, he also has to push the treachery in v. 4 right down to 723, and to me this compressed history (including Hoshea's treachery, Shalmaneser's campaign and arrest of Hoshea all in one year) does not seem likely. Thirdly, his claim that Sargon took the city, and not Shalmaneser, conflicts with the explicit and natural reading of 17:3–6. To say that "the conqueror of Samaria is not identified" and that "it is similarly unclear who exiled the Israelites" is simply an unserious reading of the obvious claims of the biblical author (*ibid.*, 53). There can be no doubt that the author claims that "the king of Assyria", who captured Samaria and deported her people, is Shalmaneser and none else. Fourthly, even if he might strictly be right in saying that "it is not stated explicitly whether he [Hoshea] was imprisoned before, during, or at the end of the siege of the city" (*ibid.*, 53), it is similarly clear that the order of the text implies that it was before. As Na'aman discarded the chronological data of 17:3–6 but tried to follow the order of events, Galil's approach is basically opposite, where he discards the events, but tries to follow the chronological data. In regard to the extra-biblical sources, even if he is aware that they attribute the fall of Samaria

both to Shalmaneser and Sargon (*ibid.*, 53–55), he apparently does not give that any weight in his reconstruction. It is clear that his one-conquest theory does not harmonize with the Assyrian sources either.

8. K. Lawson Younger

Younger published the article “The Deportations of the Israelites” in 1998 and “The Fall of Samaria in Light of Recent Research” in 1999 (Younger 1998; 1999). In neither of the articles does he attempt to set forth and argue a comprehensive view of the fall of Samaria. Still, we can follow his line of thinking as far as these two articles take us.²⁸ Even if he shows a wise care not to over-interpret the data in a historical reconstruction, his caution leaves us with many, maybe too many, unanswered questions. His concern in the 1999 article is to evaluate the various theories in light of new editions of the primary sources and recent studies (Younger 1999, 461).

He explains how Tiglath-pileser directed a series of campaigns against Israel and the surrounding areas during the years 734–732. Hoshea received Assyrian support and ascended Israel’s throne in 732, and Younger refers to Tiglath-pileser claiming that he appointed him as king. At this time the Israel that the “puppet Hoshea” was given to rule, was reduced “to nothing more than the rump state of Samaria”, without the coastal plains, Galilee and Transjordan including Gilead (Younger 1998, 202–204). He thus appears to contradict those who claim that the Assyrians took larger areas around Samaria in the time of Shalmaneser and Sargon, as “the rest of the kingdom was already part of the Assyrian empire.” (*ibid.*, 203; cf. Galil 1995, 62) As support of this he also mentions Isa 7 and Hos 4 referring to Israel only as “Ephraim” and Amos speaking of only “Joseph”, which would include Manasseh (Younger 1998, 203).

In regard to Shalmaneser he denies that there was an encounter between Shalmaneser and Hoshea in the former’s ascension year, as the approximate two months would have been too short a time to organize a military campaign, or in his first regnal year, as the Babylonian Chronicle then states that the king remained in the land (Younger 1999, 464, 467 and 478). He also denies the reconstruction of the Eponym Chronicle as referring to Samaria on the basis that it is too speculative (*ibid.*, 464). Neither is he willing to use Josephus’ reference to Menander’s description of the siege of Tyre as a basis for dating a western campaign in Shalmaneser’s second year: “The fragmentary nature of the eponyms and the filtered Phoenician tradition make this impossible to evaluate.” (*Ibid.*, 464) He also devotes several pages to argue that based on a study of *ḥepû* in the Babylonian Chronicle, it becomes clear, contrary to Na’aman’s claim, “that the verb

²⁸ Younger writes: “2 Kings 17 is a very complex passage. This is not the time or place to discuss all of its complexity.” (*Ibid.*, 215).

denotes the ruination of cities and, perhaps bombastically, of whole countries, not simply the pacification of a region".(Ibid., 465) He agrees with those claiming that it is not possible to say on the basis of the Babylonian Chronicle when during his reign that Shalmaneser "ruined Samaria", but only that he did it sometime during it (ibid., 467).

This first encounter between Shalmaneser and Hoshea took place, according to Younger, first in 724, after Hoshea had conspired against him together with the Egyptian King So. In order to harmonize the biblical material with this claim, he agrees with those who claim that 2 Kings 17:3 should not be understood sequentially as "and (then) Hoshea became vassal to him", but rather "parenthetically, as dischronologized narration: 'Now Hoshea had been vassal to him'" (ibid., 478). He then clearly comes at odds with the natural reading of the syntax of 17:3, which would then read: "King Shalmaneser marched against him (now Hoshea had been vassal to him)." If Shalmaneser marched against Hoshea in 17:3a, and then again in v. 5, but only came once, Younger has a clear challenge in regard to the biblical material. He solves this by suggesting for three different readings. All three have in common that they suggest that vs. 3–4 and vs. 5–6 are parallel accounts of the same event.²⁹ He does not argue which position he himself prefers, and I understand him as having pushed himself into a corner where he just needs to see vs. 3–4 and vs. 5–6 as referring to one event. Therefore at this juncture he leaves his otherwise sober line of reasoning just as long as the theories can give him the conclusion he needs at this point in his argumentation. He does not elucidate how he explains the biblical claim that Hoshea reigned nine years in 2 Kings 17:6 and 18:10, something he comes at odds with.

He sees it as possible also to postulate "some sort of deportation" under Shalmaneser, even if there is no information about this in the Assyrian sources (Younger 1998, 214; 1999, 474). He argues against Na'aman that we have other cases, especially Zincirli, Carchemish and Tarsus, which we know that the Assyrians captured without having left sufficient archaeological evidence to prove the point. He concludes: "It is unwise, therefore, to assume that whenever the Assyrians claim to have conquered a city its complete and utter destruction – a literal razing – took place." (Younger 1999, 474) Again, credit should be given for also consulting the archaeological evidence. As is common, he also sees Sargon's capture of Samaria to have been in 720 (Younger 1998, 217). He finds reconstructing line 26 in the Calah Inscription as a king either "hostile to me" or "my predecessor" both as too speculative (Younger 1999, 470–471). In regard to

²⁹ In seeing vs. 3–4 and vs. 5–6 as parallels of the same event, Younger refers first to Winckler, seeing them as "two parallel accounts from two different archives", second to Brettler, who sees vs. 1–2 as the standard Dtr introduction, vs. 3–4 as reflecting one Assyrian source (*sic!*) or being an editorial note, and vs. 5–6 reflecting another Assyrian source (*sic!*), and third to Hobbs claiming that they are two verse pairs stressing different aspects, the first the effects of the Assyrian invasion relating to Hoshea and the second the effects of the invasion upon the land (ibid., 477–478).

Sargon's claim in the Khorsabad Annals that he took Samaria in his accession year, this is something Younger simply ignores.³⁰

9. Summary and Conclusion

Having evaluated the views of others, I should be willing as a summary and conclusion to at least set forth what I perceive to be the most reasonable scenario. My argumentation in regard to specific details is found above, so I will just present a quick overview here.

It seems reasonable to assume that Hoshea ascended the throne in 732/31, which would make 722 his ninth year. From the Assyrian sources there is no basis for saying that he was imprisoned prior to 722. The order of events in 17:4–5 does not allow us to be conclusive, even if I do acknowledge that it lends some support to the claim that Hoshea was imprisoned prior to the siege. When Shalmaneser came to power, it is not clear from our sources whether Hoshea rebelled or not. But when Shalmaneser turned against him he acknowledged his lordship and paid him tribute. I do not see that we can give an exact time for the first encounter between Shalmaneser and Hoshea as recorded in 2 Kings 17:3. Even if associating it as Tadmor and Cogan do with his accession year and the campaign against Tyre mentioned by Josephus is the only suggestion with some credibility, I would have wanted the evidence to be clearer than it is. I do not find any evidence for saying that this was a violent encounter, but Hoshea seems to have willingly submitted at the approach of Shalmaneser, continuing to be an Assyrian vassal as he had been since his accession. Shalmaneser's only military campaign to and siege of Samaria must therefore have begun around 725/24, something that would fit the Eponym Chronicle for these years, even if there is no internal evidence in the Assyrian sources for reconstructing the Chronicle at this point. It also seems reasonable to see the reference in the Babylonian Chronicle to a city that Shalmaneser conquered as Samaria, but the only thing we can conclude with certainty – even taking the horizontal line into consideration – is that he conquered Samaria sometime during his reign.

In regard to 2 Kings 17:1–6 there seems to be no good reason for splitting the text into various sources, and it is clear that the author saw Shalmaneser as “the king of Assyria” throughout the passage. I also sympathize with Thiele's suggestion as to why we should dismiss the synchronisms in 2 Kings 17–18, as he shows a consistent pattern in the misinterpretation of the author of the Book of Kings. The suggestion made by Hayes and Kuan that Samaria had already been turned into a province in 722, to explain why the Samaritans had no king between the fall of

³⁰ He sees the capture of Samaria as having been sandwiched sometime in between Sargon's first defeat of Yau-bi'di of Hamath at Qarqar, the attack on Judah and finally the attack on the Egyptian army, as “only part of a much larger military *Blitzkrieg* that subdued the west in 720 BCE” (Younger 1998, 217–218; 1999, 471–472).

Samaria in 722 and the re-conquest of it in 720, seems to have some credit to it. I find this theory at least stronger than the claims that the Assyrians left Samaria without a king even if they had just defeated and taken control over it, the suggestion that the rebel Samaritans continued for two years without choosing a leader, or the speculation around one or more unmentioned king(s) replacing Hoshea. Even if it does press the time issue, we cannot rule out that Shalmaneser initiated deportation as mentioned in 2 Kings 17:6, even though it is clear that he cannot have completed it. I do have sympathy for those who draw the archaeological evidence and prophetic material into the discussion. We should seek as broad a basis as possible for our conclusions. The problem is, however, that the archaeological evidence does not seem to be conclusive. And in regard to the prophetic material, I have not had an opportunity to include this in the above analysis. Despite the attempted cautions by Becking and Younger, I still find Tadmor's arguments for dismissing Sargon's claims to have taken Samaria in his ascension year to be the most convincing. Having dealt with internal challenges to his usurpation of the throne, Sargon came in 720 to quell a subsequent rebellion, then initiating or completing the deportation of the citizens during the succeeding years.

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Zusammenfassung

Die Datierung des Falls von Samaria und des Jahrzehnts zuvor ist eine der am meisten umstrittenen Aspekte biblischer Chronologie. Dabei bestehen die Herausforderungen in offensichtlichen Spannungen in innerbiblischen Synchronismen, gegensätzliche Aussagen in der Bibel, der babylonischen Chronik und assyrischen Quellen bezüglich der Frage, wer Samaria eroberte und wann dies geschah, fehlende Information in assyrischen Quellen bezüglich der Regierung Salmanassar V., der Anzahl und Daten samaritischer Rebellionen und assyrischer Kriegszüge gegen Samaria, und schließlich in der Datierung der Absetzung Hoscheas als König Samarias. In diesem Artikel gebe ich einen Überblick über sieben Erklärungen der Chronologie aus jüngster Zeit (Edwin R. Thiele, Hayim Tadmor, Nadav Na'aman, John H. Hayes/Jeffrey K. Kuan, Bob Becking, Gershon Galil and K. Lawson Younger), die sich auf den Fall Samarias und die Ereignisse beziehen, die zu ihm führten. Der Beitrag analysiert, wie jeder dieser Kommentatoren mit den Textdaten umgeht, und wertet die Stärken und Schwächen der jeweiligen Theorien aus. Im Ergebnis schlage ich eine Skizze der am meisten nachvollziehbaren Ereignisse und eine Chronologie vor, die bis zum Fall Samarias reicht.

Résumé

La datation de la chute de Samarie et de la décennie qui l'a précédée est l'un des domaines les plus controversés et discutés de la chronologie biblique. Plusieurs éléments sont en jeu parmi lesquels des conflits apparents dans des synchronismes internes à la Bible, des affirmations contradictoires dans la Bible, des chroniques babyloniennes et des sources assyriennes qui interrogent sur les auteurs et la date de la conquête de Samarie, le manque d'informations dans les sources assyriennes à propos du règne de Salmanassar V, le nombre et la date des rebellions samaritaines et des campagnes assyriennes contre la Samarie, et enfin la datation de la destitution d'Osée comme roi de Samarie. Dans cet article, je présente sept explications chronologiques récentes proposées pour dater la chute de Samarie et les événements qui l'ont précédée (Edwin R. Thiele, Hayim Tadmor, Nadav Na'aman, John H. Hayes / Jeffrey K. Kuan, Bob Becking, Gershon Galil et K. Lawson Younger), analysant comment chaque commentateur traite les données textuelles, et évaluant les forces et les faiblesses des différentes théories. Au final, pour résumer et conclure, je suggère également un schéma directeur de la chronologie et des événements les plus crédibles menant à la chute de Samarie.

Kenneth Bergland, M.A., is project manager at the Norwegian Bible Institute.
E-mail: kenneth.bergland@norskibibelinstitutt.no